

that Ther nys thyng in this world, of which we sholden have so greet joye as whan oure conscience bereth us good witness; & the wise man seith: The substance of a man is ful good, whan synne is nat in mannes conscience.

AFTERWARD, in getyng of youre riches, and in usyng of hem, yow moste have greet bisynesse & greet diligence, that youre goode name be alwey kept & conserved. For Salomon seith: that Bettre it is and moore it availleth a man to have a good name, than for to have grete riches. And therfore he seith in another place: Do greet diligence, seith Salomon, in keepyng of thy freend and of thy goode name, for it shal lenger abide with thee than any tresour, be it never so precious. And certes, he sholde nat be called a gentilman, that after God and good conscience, alle thynges left, ne dooth his diligence and bisynesse to kepen his good name. And Cassidore seith: that It is signe of gentil herte, whan a man loveth and desireth to han a good name. And therfore seith Seint Augustyn: that Ther been two thynges that are necessarye and nedfulle, & that is, good conscience and good loos: that is to seyn, good conscience to thyn owene persone inward, and good loos for thyneighbores outward. And he that trusteth hym so muchel in his goode conscience, that he displeth and setteth at noght his goode name or loos, & rekketh noght though he kepe nat his goode name, nys but a cruel cherl.

SIRE, now have I shewed yow how ye shul do in getyng riches, & how ye shullen usen hem; & I se wel, that for the trust that ye han in youre riches, ye wole moove werre & bataille. I conseilte yow, that ye bigynne no werre in trust of youre riches; for theyne suffisen noght werres to mayntene. And therfore seith a philosophre: That man that desireth & wole algates han werre, shal nevere have suffisaunce; for the richer that he is, the gretter despenses moste he make, if he wole have worshippe & victorie. And Salomon seith: that The gretter riches that a man hath, the mo despendours he hath. And, deere sire, albeit so that for youre riches ye mowe have muchel folk, yet bihoveth it nat, ne it is nat good to bigynne werre, whereas ye mowe in oother manere have pees, unto youre worshippe and profit. For the victories of batailles that been in this world, lyen nat in greet nombre or multitude of the peple, ne in the vertu of man; but it lith in the wyl & in the hand of oure Lord God Almyghty.

AND therfore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knyght, whan he sholde fighte agayn his adversarie that hadde a greet nombre, and a gretter multitude of folk & strengier than was this peple of Machabee, yet here comforted his lifel compaignye, & seyde right in this wise: Als lightly, quod he, may oure Lord God Almyghty yeve victorie to a fewe folk as to many folk, for the victorie of a bataille comth nat by the grete nombre of peple, but it come from oure Lord God of heven.

AND deere sire, for as muchel as there is no man certein, if he be worthy that God yeve hym victorie, namore than he is certein whether he be worthy of the love of God or naught, after that Salomon seith, therefore every man sholde drede werres to bigynne. And bycause that in batailles fallen manye perils, & hapeth outhertwhile that as soone is the grette man slayn as the litel man; and, as it is writen in the seconde book of Kynges, The dedes of batailles been aventureuse & nothyng certeyne; for as lightly is oon hurt with a spere as another. And for ther is gret peril in werre, therefore sholde a man fle and eschue werre, in as muchel as a man may goodly; for Salomon seith: He that loveth peril shal falle in peril.

AFTER that dame Prudence hadde spoken in this manere, Melibee answered and seyde, I see wel, dame Prudence, that by youre faire wordes, and by youre resouns that ye han shewed me, that the werre liketh yow nothyng; but I have nat yet herd youre conseil, how I shal do in this nede.

CERTES, quod she, I conseilte yow that ye accorde with youre adversaries, and that ye have pees with hem; for Seint Jame seith, in his epistles, that By concord & pees the smale riches wexen grete, and by debaat and discord the greter riches fallen down; and ye knowen wel that oon of the gretteste and mooste sovereyn thyng that is in this world, is unytee and pees. And therfore seyde oure Lord Jhesu Crist to his apostles in this wise: Wel happy and blessed been they that loven and purchacen pees; for they been called children of God.

A QUOD Melibee, now se I wel that ye loven nat myn honour ne my worshippe. Ye knowen wel that myne adversaries han bigonnen this debaat and bryge by hire outrage; and ye se wel that they ne requeren ne preyen me nat of pees, ne they asken nat to be reconciled. Wol ye thanne that I go and meke me and obeye me to hem, and crie hem mercy? forsothe, that were nat my worshippe; for right as men seyn, that Over greet humylnesse com

gendreth dispreysyng, so fareth it by to greet humylitee or mekenesse.

THANNE bigan dame Prudence to maken semblant of wrathe, and seyde, Certes, sire, sauf youre grace, I love youre honour and your profit as I do myn owene, and evere have doon; ne ye, ne noon oother, syen nevere the contrarie. And yit, if I hadde seyde that ye sholde han purchaced the pees and the reconsiliacioun, I ne hadde nat muchel mystaken me, ne seyde amys; for the wise man seith, The dissensioun bigynneth by another man, and the reconsilyng bygynneth by thyself. And the prophete seith, flee shrewednesse & do goodnesse; seke pees and folwe it, as muchel as in thee is. Yet seye I nat that ye shul rather pursue to youre adversaries for pees than they shul to yow; for I knowe wel that ye been so hardherted, that ye wol do nothyng forme; and Salomon seith, He that hath overhard an herte, atte laste he shal myshappe and mystyde.

THANNE Melibee hadde herd dame Prudence maken semblant of wrathe, he seyde in this wise: Dame, I prey yow that ye be nat displeyed of thynges that I seye; for ye knowe wel that I am angry and wrooth, and that is no wonder; & they that been wrothe witen nat wel what they doon, ne what they seyn. Therfore the prophete seith: that Troubled eyen han no cleer sighte. But seye eth and conseilte me as yow liketh; for I am redy to do right as ye wol desire; and if ye repreve me of my folye, I am the moore holden to love yow and to preyse yow; for Salomon seith: that He that repreveth hym that dooth folye, he shal fynde gretter grace than he that deceyveth hym by sweete wordes.

THANNE seide dame Prudence, I make no semblant of wrathe ne anger but for youre grete profit; for Salomon seith, He is moore worth, that repreveth or chideth a fool for his folye, shewyng hym semblant of wrathe, than he that supporteth hym and preyseth hym in his mysdoynge, & laugheth at his folye. And this same Salomon seith afterward: that By the sorweful visage of a man, that is to seyn, by the sory & hevvy contenance of a man, The fool correcteth & amendeth hymself.

THANNE seyde Melibee, I shal nat konne answer to so manye faire resouns as ye putten to me & shewen. Seyeth shortly youre wyl & youre conseil, and I am al redy to fulfille and parfoume it.

THANNE dame Prudence discovered al hir wyl to hym, & seyde, I conseilte yow, quod she, aboven alle thynges, that ye make pees bitwene God and yow; and beth reconciled unto hym and to his grace; for as I have seyde yow heer bifore, God hath suffred yow to have this tribulacioun and disese for youre synnes. And if ye do as I sey yow, God wol sende youre adversaries unto yow, and maken hem fallen at youre feet, redy to do youre wyl and youre comandements. For Salomon seith, Whan the condicioun of man is plesant & likyng to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries and constreyneth hem to biseken hym of pees and of grace. And I prey yow, lat me speke with youre adversaries in privee place; for they shul nat knowe that it be of youre wyl or youre assent; and thanne, whan I knowe hir wil and hire entente, I may conseilte yow the moore seurely.

DAAME, quod Melibee, dooth youre wil & youre likyng, for I putte me hoolly in youre disposicioun & ordinaunce. Channe dame Prudence, whan she saugh the goode wyl of hir housbonde, delibered and took avys in hirself, thinkinge how she myghte bryng this nede unto a good conclusioun and to a good ende. And whan she saugh hir tyme, she sente for these adversaries to come unto hire into a pryvee place, and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that been in werre; and seyde to hem in a goodly manere hou that hem oughten have greet repentance of the injurie and wrong that they hadden doon to Melibee hir lord, & to hire, and to hire doghter.

AND whan they herden the goodliche wordes of dame Prudence, they weren so supprised and ravysshed, & hadden so greet joye of hire, that wonder was to telle. H lady! quod they, ye han shewed unto us The blessyng of swetnesse, after the sawe of David the prophete; for the reconsilyng which we been nat worthy to have in no manere, but we oghte requeren it with greet contricioun & humylitee, ye, of youre grete goodnesse, have presented unto us. Now se we wel that the science & the konnyng of Salomon is ful trewe; for he seith: that Sweete wordes multiplen & encreesen freendes, and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meke.

CERTES, quod they, we putten oure dede, and al oure matere and cause, al hoolly in youre goode wyl; and been redy to obeye to the speche and comandement of my lord Melibee. And therfore, deere & benygne lady, we preien yow and biseke yow as mekely as we konne